

Faculty Senate Minutes November 3, 2011

Call to Order: Chair Sharp called the meeting to order at 4:10 pm; Riggle Room; ADUC

Senators Absent: J.T. Blackledge, Vincent Cesaro, Donna Everett, Stephanie Johnson, Nilesch Joshi, Gary La Fleur, Lee Nabb, Rodney Stanley, Scott Wymer

Visitor: Dr. Gerald DeMoss, Jennifer Cooper proxy for Lori Baruth, Sara Lindsey proxy for Lesia Lennex

Minutes: Senator Royar moved to approve the minutes of October 20, 2011 as submitted. Senator Wright seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Committee Reports:

Academic Issues: Meeting with Dr. Dayna Seelig regarding high school dual credit; gathering data regarding computer replacement

Evaluation: No Report

Faculty Welfare and Concerns: Bringing PAC 7 to floor for first reading

Governance: Presenting a revision to the General Education Council description; recommendation for the Faculty Promotion Committee

Senate Committee on Issues: No Report

Reports:

Chair's Report:

- Reviewed some of the items discussed in the President's forum
- Met with Dr. Hughes, Dr. DeMoss and Senator Rathbun to discuss PAC 7 and PAC 27
- College of Education met all standards for The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education programs (NCATE) review

Senator Watkins stated that Kathryn Polmanteer, Associate Dean College of Education did an outstanding job working with the NCATE review.

Open Chair Segment:

Senator Scott Davison spoke during the Open Chair Segment. There was considerable discussion after Senator Davison's remarks. Senator Hennen moved that Senator Davison's remarks be included in the minutes. Senator Morrison seconded the motion. Motion passed. Senator Davison's remarks:

"Most MSU faculty pursue professional achievement in a serious way. Not all faculty make this a priority, but most of us do. Most MSU faculty also pursue quality instruction in the classroom. Not all faculty make this a priority, but most of us do. When I talk with faculty from other universities, and I tell them that we have a 4/4 teaching load with caps determined by enrollment targets set for each discipline, they often wonder out loud how we can provide high quality instruction and pursue professional achievement at the same time.

I have expressed before the concern that assessment at MSU has contributed significantly to faculty workload, and that we need to assess the assessment by counting its costs and benefits. As this semester draws to a close, we are starting to see the additional demands that will be placed on us in connection with the assessment of our new General Education courses. We are also starting to see new demands that stem from the CPE's new funding criteria involving retention, which are showing up in expectations for advising and in the annual APNA program assessment process.

We cannot control the CPE's funding criteria, and so we must respond to those. But we can control how we assess General Education. I want to state clearly that we should all appreciate the thousands of hours of work that people invested in the creation of the new Gen Ed framework. There was a problem to be solved, and there were reasons for making each decision that was made at every point in that process, but I think we are facing some unforeseen consequences now that everything is in place. I am not

blaming anyone for this. But with all due respect to those who contributed to the current plan, I would like us to reconsider how we assess Gen Ed.

Our current plan involves instruments that vary from discipline to discipline even though they are designed to measure the same outcome, and the final result is supposed to measure the change in students over the course of the semester that is due to taking the course in question. As academics, though, we have to be honest here -- we cannot say that the changes we measure in this way are actually due to participation in our Gen Ed courses. We all know that correlation does not always indicate causation, and that there are literally hundreds of variables that contribute to student progress in any given semester. We have no way of controlling for these variables; we have no way of knowing whether student progress is due to the Gen Ed course as opposed to a general increase in maturity, or other courses the student is taking, or interaction with students and faculty, or better nutrition and sleep habits, or any number of other things, or any combination of these things. So we cannot say that this approach will actually assess the effectiveness of our Gen Ed courses.

But this approach definitely will impose a significant burden on faculty time, and promises to do so indefinitely. I want to suggest that we keep the Gen Ed framework of course requirements intact, but change the assessment process. I suggest that we charge the coordinator of assessment to create new, discipline-independent, uniform assessment instruments for each Gen Ed outcome that can be used across all sections of all courses. These instruments can count as part of student grades, they can be administered by the faculty in class, and then they can be graded in a uniform way by the assessment staff, not by the faculty. These changes would contribute to the scientific validity of the assessment process. If existing staff are not adequate for the task of grading the assessments, then additional staff should be hired for this purpose.

In response to this suggestion in the past, I have been told that according to best practices in the field of assessment, assessment instruments should be course embedded and discipline specific and graded by the faculty as part of the course. But how significant is the difference between best practice and really good practice in this area? Why can't we use less than the best practices, if the best practices turn out to be very costly in terms of faculty workload and do not return scientifically respectable results?

To put the question another way, shouldn't we care about best practices for faculty workload at least as much as we care about best practices for Gen Ed assessment? Gen Ed assessment should not have an unrestricted claim on faculty time, especially when we all know that we are not really measuring the effect of these courses. Pursuing quality teaching and professional achievement, not to mention service and advising, is already very difficult given our standard teaching workload. But assessment related activities are making a difficult task nearly impossible. Something needs to give. I think it should be our methods of assessment. When we assess the assessment, we realize that the benefits of our current process (namely, statistics that we cannot take seriously, if we are honest) do not justify the costs associated with that process (namely, a huge investment of faculty time and energy). We should cut our losses and find another way to assess the effectiveness of Gen Ed.

Provost's Report:

- Open house will be Saturday, November 5th; approximately 515 students are registered to attend
- There is discussion on campus regarding establishing a chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Michelle McNeil, Christine McMichael, Kimberlee Sharp, Ann Rathbun and Emma Perkins have expressed an interest in leading this effort. Contact the Provost if you are interested in receiving more information.
- Question and answer session with Provost will be held at the next meeting

Regent's Report:

- Regent Ron Morrison reported that he attended one of the open forums with President Andrews and that he wanted to provide the Senate with answers to two of the questions that he asked.

- When he asked the President about rate increases in health insurance premiums for employees for 2012, Dr. Andrews noted these modest increases are a result of an attempt to move the employee cost of health insurance closer to the goal of a 25% employee/75% University. These increases will move us to approximately 23% employee and 77% University contributions. Dr. Andrews also noted that the overall rates from Anthem/Blue Cross are unchanged from 2011.
- Regent Morrison also asked about the possibility of mid-year salary adjustments, which were mentioned last spring as we set enrollment goals. Dr. Andrews reported that the possibility "is still on the table."
- Regent Morrison also noted that the BOR will have a work session on Thursday, 17 November. No agenda has yet been distributed for that meeting.

General Education:

- Working to find a GEC member from the College of Education
- Passed and forwarded the incentive plan for First-Year Seminar faculty
- Computer Competency Plan will be discussed during the GEC meeting on November 4, 2011

Scheduling Committee:

- Developing draft surveys to administer to faculty, staff and students
- Will provide link to Scheduling Subcommittee reports for review and feedback to the committee

Dr. Gerald DeMoss spoke to the Senate about the formation of the PAC Reconciliation Committee to review three policies forwarded to the Administration by the Senate. Dr. DeMoss chaired the committee of four Faculty Senators and four Administrators who met during the summer. Revisions to PAC 7 and PAC 27 were completed and sent back to the President and Provost and then to the Faculty Welfare and Concerns Committee. PAC 27 is still in the Reconciliation Committee. Dr. DeMoss explained the major changes to the PACs. PAC 7 will come before the Senate today.

Some questions raised were:

- Line 52 "The annual report of activity must come from Faculty 180" Does this mean the annual report can only come from Faculty 180?
- A question was asked regarding the use of a "Reconciliation" type committee in the future to bridge between the Administration and the Senate
- Since this committee worked over the summer, should there be retroactive compensation for the faculty members who served on this committee; and compensation for such a committee in the future if they are required to work during non-contract time?.
- Line 13 and 14 "A department FEP must be consistent with university and college policies" Are there University and College Policies on FEPs?
- Could Line 24 "Teaching evaluation shall include (a) student review and (b) peer and/or chair/associate dean review" be problematic for departments?
- Should Line 14 "Before implementation, each ~~a~~ FEP must be approved by ~~by a simple majority of the tenured and tenure-track faculty of the department,~~ **50% or more of the tenured faculty of the department and...** be changed to "**more than 50%**"?
- Dr. DeMoss asked for clarification of who will make the suggested changes.
- Line 15 "Were options to the "50% or more of the tenured faculty..." ever considered?
- Should there be a process in the PAC regarding revising an FEP as opposed to creating a new one?
- Is it still permissible for an FEP in a multi-discipline department to include sub-disciplines?

Senate Actions:

Faculty Welfare and Concerns: Senator Rathbun presented PAC 7 (Faculty Evaluation Plans – FEPs) to the Senate for a first reading indicating questions only, no debate. Some questions were:

- Line 25-26-27 – Has the wording always read "~~Student evaluations of teaching shall account for no more than 50% of the evaluation of a faculty member's teaching.~~ **Student evaluations of teaching**

shall account for no more than 50% of the evaluation of a faculty member's teaching"?

Senator Rathbun indicated that yes it has always been in there and she has made note of it.

- Line 15 – Should it be “more than 50%” instead of “50% or more”?

Governance:

- The Governance committee recommended Donna Everett replace Dr. Wayne Willis in an at-large position on the Faculty Promotion Committee for the remainder of this academic year. Recommendation was approved by vote of the Senate.
- Senator Royar presented a revision to the General Education Council Description, brought to Governance by the GEC. The changes are in Lines 51 thru 60, how people are appointed to the GEC. Senator Royar explained the changes and the reasoning for them. There was considerable discussion about Lines 49 through 60. Several friendly amendments were suggested but none received a second. Senator Chatham made a motion to recommit the GEC description to the Governance Committee for further review. Senator Royar asked for more specific directions as to what the description was being recommitted for. After continued discussion, Senator Katz called the question to vote on recommitting the GEC description to the Governance Committee. Senator Chatham seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Announcements:

The next Senate meeting will be November 17th.

Senator Applegate moved to adjourn. Senator Abell seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Adjournment: 6:00 p.m.